

BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA

PREVENTION · EDUCATION · ADVOCACY
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March 31, 2009

The Brain Injury Association of Montana respectfully requests that the Senate Finance Committee appropriate \$100,000 per year for the Resource Facilitation Service in HB 645.

The RFS is a three year old service that provided information, referrals and self-advocacy assistance to over 500 individuals and families living with brain injury last year. RFS helps families affected with brain injury to stay together, keeps children in school, and helps survivors maintain or return to employment.

RFS received one-time state funding of \$100,000 in FY 2008. Continued funding was included in the Department's EPP but not in the Governor's budget recommendation.

RFS funding supports 1.5 FTE and the community office infrastructure in Missoula. The BIAMT augments these resources through fundraising, other grants, hiring practicum students and interns, and coordinating volunteers.

We work with brain injury support groups around the state to spread the message of brain injury prevention and brain injury recovery. The interns and practicum students we train take their new expertise about brain injury into the community and share it with their coworkers in other settings.

We educate hospitals on the unique challenges that TBI survivors encounter after discharge and encourage hospitals to enroll survivors in RFS before they are sent home.

We are working with the Rural Institute to educate first responders about RFS, expand our data-collecting capacity and insure that more Montanans know about the services and supports that make recovery possible.

Thank you for your support for this lifeline for brain injury survivors and families.

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A BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION AFFILIATE

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March 30, 2009
Senate Finance Committee

Dear Chairman Bales and Committee Members,

My name is Robert Snizek; I work as the medical case manager of the Headway program at St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings, Montana. We are the only coordinated outpatient brain injury recovery program in the eastern part of the state, and every year we work with dozens of patients who have recently been injured.

St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings has given more referrals to the Resource Facilitation Service than any other healthcare provider in Montana because we know it works. In Billings the Resource Facilitation Service has in large measure closed the "crack" that many brain-injured Montanans fell into before the RFS existed. Sadly what used to happen to many patients after a concussion or a "mild brain injury" was they were sent home with a stack of papers and asked to call back if there were problems. For many folks things did get worse and those without family support (or medical training) would end up eventually losing their jobs, getting divorced and knocking on our program's door two years after the injury asking for help -- finally. I am not exaggerating, this type of story was common prior to this program being implemented in Billings and although we can help *a little bit two years after the fact* -- the chance to have a bigger impact is missed. RFS provides a life-line so the injured can get the help they need to become productive again.

With the Resource Facilitation Service, the injured can get support and information from a neutral source. It has been my experience that this service saves money when the person with a brain injury can identify the problem early in the process when the brain is still healing. Early intervention increases the chance we can help that patient heal, and get back to work -- not to mention the marriages that can be saved when problems are identified for what they are. Last year 12 Headway patients with brain injuries (who were not working when we started outpatient treatment) were able to return to their old jobs after an average of two months of therapy. Their wages equal about \$300,000, so for me RFS is not just a "feel good program," it is an investment in the medical community, the workers of Montana and their employers.

I wish I could be in Helena to testify directly, but wanted to share why I see value in this program as a professional, and pray it is seen as the investment it is. You may call me at work if there are any questions, (406) 238-6440.

Sincerely,
Robert Snizek, MS CRC